

ASSESSING DEVELOPMENT
IN AND THROUGH VISUAL ARTS:
CASE STUDIES OF FIVE HONG KONG PRESCHOOLERS

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Cheung", written in grey ink.

Date: 28 February 2014

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Abstract

Facing the request on school quality assurance requested by the Hong Kong Education Bureau, the children's development is one of the four domains in assessing the quality of a pre-primary institution. However, assessing young children's aesthetic performance is regarded as a difficult task. This thesis aims to investigate what young children's development is in and through the visual arts, and how it can be assessed. It also aims to examine the validity of the *Hong Kong Performance Indicators (Pre-primary Institutions): Domain on Children's Development* in assessing children's development in visual arts by comparing with the findings found. This qualitative research assumes that children's development is individualized and holistic, not limits in aesthetic and creative areas in the visual arts activities, but also includes the physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural areas reflected in portfolios. The assumption on holistic child development in visual arts is supported by Lowenfeld (1957), Fox and Schirrmacher (2012).

Case study on five four-year-old children was conducted for seven months in an early childhood institution. Direct observation on a 30-minute visual arts activity was recorded weekly in digital format. The data were analyzed and categorized in a form of electronic portfolio, served as evidences of the children's development. The children's various areas of development were presented with reference of assessment frameworks suggested by Lowenfeld, Fox and Schirrmacher. Different growth rates and patterns of children's development are found among the five children. And, the portfolio assessment can be regarded as one of the appropriate method for assessing aesthetic development as well as development in other aspects in early childhood

settings.

The study is the first in-depth research in assessing pre-school young children's development in and through visual arts activities in Hong Kong. It may serve as a reference for preschool teachers in assessing children's holistic development in and through visual arts, as well as a study on the validity of the Hong Kong Performance Indicators on children's aesthetic development (EMB & SWD 2003).

Key words:

assessment, visual arts, performance indicators, preschooler, early childhood, case study, portfolios

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

EDB / ED / EMB, Education Bureau

The Education Bureau (EDB) is responsible for education policies in Hong Kong. The Education Department (ED) and Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) merged to become the new Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) on 1 January 2003; and it was renamed to Education Bureau (EDB) in 2007.

SWD, Social Welfare Department

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is responsible for social welfare policies including the family and child care service in Hong Kong. Children aged under three are within its scope of service.

CDC, Curriculum Development Council

The Curriculum Development Council is an advisory body appointed by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to give recommendations to the government on all matters relating to curriculum development for the school system from kindergarten to sixth form. Its membership includes heads of schools, practising teachers, parents, employers, academics from tertiary institutions, professional from related field or related bodies and representative from the Hong Kong Examinations Authority, as well as officers from the Education Department.

Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education in Hong Kong refers to the stage of education before primary school for children who are generally aged 0-6.

Preschooler

The preschoolers or young children normally aged 2-6 in Hong Kong pre-primary institutions. The preschoolers in this study are aged four.

Visual arts

It refers to the creation or products of drawing, painting, design, sculpture, etc.

Children's talk

It refers to the child's talk to himself, his peers, teachers, and others in this study. It may be sounds, exclamations, conversations, discussion, analysis, comments, praises, a talk on one's own artwork or others' work in art appreciation activities.

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